



# Health and Human Services MEDIA RELEASE



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 17, 2015

## Everyone has a role in controlling the spread of Tuberculosis (TB)

*March 24 is World TB Day*

SARASOTA COUNTY — The Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County (DOH-Sarasota) will join in the World TB Day observance on Tuesday, March 24. The World Health Organization (WHO) theme “**Find TB, Treat TB, Working together to eliminate TB**” is meant to engage people everywhere in the global fight against TB.

The focus is on celebrating the lives and stories of people who have been cured of TB. Additionally, the observance recognizes the nurses, doctors, researchers, and public health staff who work daily to stop the spread of TB in the community.

Everyone is encouraged to learn more about TB which affects nearly nine million people worldwide. Although the number of TB cases reported in the United States in 2013 was the lowest recorded since national reporting began 9,582 TB cases occurred in four states (California, Texas, New York, and Florida). Health officials say that because of vigilant public health monitoring and treatment efforts directed toward TB elimination, TB control and prevention, cases of TB have been trending downward in Florida for several years.

Anyone can get TB disease. Those with increased risk of getting TB include people living with medical conditions such as diabetes, certain types of cancers, and being underweight; and anyone who might be or is infected with the HIV virus. Homeless individuals, people who live in overcrowded conditions and foreign-born residents from countries where TB is common are also at increased risk.

Public Health officials say that risk occurs when there is prolonged contact with a contagious person in a poorly ventilated area. TB germs are spread through the air when a person with TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs, sneezes, speaks, or sings. TB is NOT spread by: shaking someone’s hand, sharing food or drink, touching bed linens or toilet seats, sharing toothbrushes or kissing.



### **MEDIA NOTES:**

#### **DOH-Sarasota Media Contact:**

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Those who breathe in the air containing TB germs can develop latent TB infection. These individuals are not contagious because they are not yet sick with the disease. However, they may develop active TB disease in the future. About one-third of the world's population has latent TB. Health officials say that there is a course of treatment with medication that can prevent latent TB infection (LTBI) from progressing to active TB disease.

Symptoms of TB disease include weakness or fatigue, weight loss, fever, night sweats, chronic coughing, chest pain, no appetite and coughing up blood. If not treated properly, TB disease can be fatal.

"If a person has TB infection or disease, they should get the required tests, follow doctor's advice and take the medicine as prescribed," says DOH-Sarasota Medical Director Dr. William Heymann. "TB disease can be treated by taking several drugs for 6 to 12 months. However, it is important to take the medicine exactly as prescribed. Perhaps the most important measure to control TB is one of the simplest - Directly Observed Therapy (DOT). Trained personnel meet with people with TB and observe them taking their medication for the duration of treatment, which can extend six months or longer. DOT is extremely cost-effective in that it does not require hospitalization."

Staff from DOH-Sarasota's Disease Intervention Services Office provide case management, including identifying those who have had contact with individuals with TB who reside in Sarasota County. In addition, evaluation and treatment for LTBI is offered.

Although the number of people affected with TB has been declining throughout Florida, public health officials agree that only as vigilant monitoring continues will we see real progress in the fight against TB.

More information on TB:

**Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County:** 941-861-2873; [www.sarasotahealth.org](http://www.sarasotahealth.org)

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):** [www.cdc.gov/nchstp/tb/](http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/tb/)

**CDC Link to personal stories:** <http://www.cdc.gov/tb/topic/basics/personalstories.htm>

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Sarasota County prohibits discrimination in all services, programs or activities.  
View the complete policy at [www.scgov.net/ADA/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.scgov.net/ADA/Pages/default.aspx)

**MEDIA NOTES:** A fact sheet on Tuberculosis including local trend data is available upon request.

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